



## **FACT SHEET**

### **Antidegradation Policy Implementation**

#### ***Why Is Antidegradation Policy Implementation A High Priority?***

The federal Clean Water Act (CWA) regulations require states to develop an antidegradation policy implementation plan.

#### ***Background***

In 1996, Alaska adopted its current antidegradation policy into the Water Quality Standards (18 AAC 70). The basic purpose of the antidegradation policy is to maintain and protect existing water quality. Many waterbodies have natural water quality that is better than the criteria set by the Water Quality Standards found in 18 AAC 70. In such cases, a wastewater discharge may meet water quality standards, but still cause some degradation of the water body. The antidegradation policy sets requirements that a discharge must meet to justify lowering the existing water quality.

The CWA requires that the implementation plan specify the procedures and criteria used to determine (1) when waters are degraded by discharges or nonpoint sources of pollution, (2) whether there are cost effective alternatives to the new or increased discharge, and (3) what social and economic benefit to the state would be necessary to justify any degradation. The plan must also have procedures for nomination and designation of Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRW), which allows special protections for these designated waterbodies.

#### ***What will DEC be proposing?***

The department will develop implementation guidance that will provide specific information and procedures necessary to ensure the requirements of Alaska's antidegradation policy are met in a consistent and predictable fashion. This guidance will be developed in collaboration with other state and federal agencies, and public input.

#### ***Who is affected?***

- Wastewater discharge permittees.
- Wastewater discharge permittees discharging to potential outstanding national resource waters in national and state parks and refuges.
- Waterbody users such as commercial, subsistence and sport fishing interests.

Antidegradation Policy Implementation Plan Factsheet  
Department of Environmental Conservation

***For more Information***

If you have questions or comments see our website at

<http://www.state.ak.us/dec/water/wqsar/wqs/triennialreview> or contact

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